

FOUR GOALS IN 13 MINUTES SHATTER SUTTON'S HOPES

By 'NOVA'

Sutton 1, Wycombe Wanderers 4

THE score-line might suggest an easy victory for the Wanderers but in fact it was only in those last exciting minutes that they were really on top.

Sutton probably count themselves unlucky not to have made victory certain before that final hectic period, for territorially they were almost always on top.

But although they had most of the play in the first half and for two-thirds of the second, they could not turn the advantage into goals.

Wycombe played the more cultured football, whereas Sutton relied largely on speed and tenacity — and this kept Wycombe pinned down for long periods. But Sutton never really looked like producing goals — and on the few occasions that the Wanderers' forwards got going they always looked dangerous.

OFF THE TARGET

The first half produced hardly one notable shot from Wycombe, but Sutton tested Brown several times. Left winger Goodall twice sent tremendous shots high over the bar and right winger Tony Harding, the former Barnet inside forward, went close with two headers.

For the first 25 minutes of the second half, too, the fire and enthusiasm of the Sutton attackers kept Wycombe pinned in their own penalty area, but centre-half John Fisher, in one of his best games for the club, and Alistair Lewis, cool and tough, kept the goal intact. Shots were blocked, Brown saved courageously, Beck stopped a drive on the line and Goodall shot over the bar for the umpteenth time.

If Sutton had scored during this period of continuous pressure they might well have hustled Wycombe out with a goal-rush. But Wycombe had weathered the storm — and then countered with a hurricane of their own.

Len Worley, playing in the No. 10 shirt but always lurking on the wing, came into his own, sending both Horseman and James streaking goalwards. They did not score but this was the turning point, for it underlined Sutton's defensive weakness.

With the centre-half lying deep, the quick through ball was the one to upset their defence and the Wanderers cashed in on it at last.

CLOSE WATCH

Paul Bates had two men marking him throughout the game and in the decisive phase the defenders were too busy watching him to worry about the other four! When he went onto the wing in the middle of the second half, with Tony Horseman inside, two men still religiously attended him.

With only 13 minutes to go, this gave Wycombe the gap they needed. Worley gave a square pass to Horseman, who hit the ball through the middle. Peter James, always ready to challenge, followed the ball between two defenders and, as the goalkeeper came out, sent it unerringly into the left hand corner of the net.

Within a couple of minutes, before Sutton had recovered from the shock, Worley virtually sealed the issue with one of his rare goals — and what a gem! After beating five men in a brilliant dribble he scored with a left foot shot which scraped inside the post.

Sutton moved centre-half Percy Vince into the forward-line in a last ditch effort, but it worked in reverse for, from a Bates corner, James headed apparently onto the arm of a defender on the line. Bates took the ensuing penalty and scored easily.

Vince managed to scramble

one in for Sutton almost immediately afterwards but again Wycombe swept back with an amazing goal. When Bates got the ball midway between the centre-line and the penalty area, Horseman and Worley both ran down the wings. The four defenders in front of Bates were apparently under the impression that he was going to pass to one of them and they chased after them, leaving Bates with a clear path to goal. Calmly he walked round the goalkeeper and placed the ball into the back of the net!

BACK TO FORM

It was good to see Dave Thomas back to his best form, always urging his forwards on but never neglecting his defensive duties.

John Beck, despite a nagging second half injury, kept winger Goodall in check with some fierce tackling. It was fortunate that Lewis played well for in front of him Charlie Gale was never as dominating as he has been in many games this season.

The forward line, with the exception of the shadowed Bates, all played better than for some weeks. Worley was back to his confident self, receiving good service from George Blair.

Tony Horseman was not in action much during the first half but when he switched to inside-forward in the second he always looked dangerous.

Peter James was more effective at centre-forward than any other player in the position so far this season, and took his goal chance perfectly.